Commercial Statement prepared by Swakeleys Ltd:

This statement is in support of a new application for two flats at 11 Swakeleys Road.

Experience and Track Record

Since 1993, I have specialised in acquiring, redeveloping and operating public houses. My approach has consistently been to identify suitable locations, secure the necessary planning permissions and premises licences, undertake comprehensive refurbishment works, and create successful, sustainable businesses. Over more than three decades, I have developed a proven track record of transforming underperforming or redundant premises into thriving community assets.

Examples of my work in the local area include:

Ruislip Manor (2004)
I acquired a large public house that was trading poorly. Following a careful assessment of the site, I divided the building into two separate units, selling one half to an estate agency while extensively refurbishing the remaining public house. The refurbished pub has traded successfully ever since as **Hennessys**.

Greenford Broadway (2006)
I successfully obtained planning permission to convert a former dry cleaners into a public house. Following the grant of a premises licence, I completed the conversion and opened Hennessys, which became a successful and well-established local business.

West Ealing (2007)
I acquired a large, closed Iceland where JD Wetherspoon had abandoned plans to open a pub. I transformed the ground floor into a café and a public house, both of which traded successfully, while converting the vacant upper-floor offices into residential flats. This project demonstrates my ability to deliver complex mixed-use developments that create long-term commercial and community value.

These projects illustrate my experience in identifying commercially viable solutions that preserve and enhance public house use while adapting buildings to meet changing market conditions.

The Tichenham Inn

In May 2021, I purchased the Tichenham Inn, which at the time was being operated by J. D. Wetherspoon under a lease. In May 2024, Wetherspoon exercised its contractual break clause, having concluded that the premises were no longer commercially viable.

The challenges facing the Tichenham Inn are principally structural rather than operational.

The existing building is substantially larger than current trading levels require. With a customer capacity of 249, the premises often appear empty and lack atmosphere, even when accommodating around 30 customers. This creates an environment that is less attractive to patrons and more difficult to operate successfully.

The internal layout is also highly inefficient. Both the cellar and customer toilets are located on the first floor, resulting in unnecessary operational difficulties.

Staff must go upstairs to the cellar to change a barrel, deliveries are more complicated than they need to be, and customers face inconvenience when using upstairs toilets, as well as the additional supervision issues for staff.

These physical constraints significantly increase operating costs while detracting from the overall customer experience.

The Wider Context

The challenges facing the Tichenham Inn are not unique. They reflect wider pressures affecting the pub sector across the country.

The ongoing pressures facing the pub sector are evident in the latest industry data. During the first three months of 2026, 161 pubs closed across England, Scotland and Wales, equivalent to approximately two pubs per day. These closures resulted in approximately 2,400 job losses and represented a 26% increase on the 128 closures recorded during the same period in 2025.

The decline is not a short-term phenomenon. Analysis of British Beer & Pub Association data shows that the number of pubs in the UK has fallen from approximately 60,800 in 2000 to 44,650 in 2025 – a reduction of around 16,150 pubs, or 36%.

The financial pressures on operators have also intensified during 2026. From April 2026, changes to the business rates system and the 2026 revaluation resulted in significantly higher business rates for some pubs, following the removal of the previous pandemic-era relief arrangements.

The scale of the challenge has been recognised by the Government. In July 2026, the Government announced a 20% reduction in business rates for pubs, clubs and live music venues, demonstrating the extent to which the sector is considered to require additional support. Further changes to national planning policy were also proposed in August 2026 in response to concerns about the ongoing loss of pubs and their importance as community assets.

At the same time, consumer spending remains under pressure. Recent hospitality research found that 35% of UK consumers planned to reduce their hospitality expenditure, demonstrating the continuing sensitivity of customers to the cost of eating and drinking out.

These circumstances demonstrate why the long-term viability of individual pubs increasingly depends upon their ability to adapt. The issue is not simply whether people continue to use pubs; rather, it is whether individual premises are configured and operated efficiently enough to convert customer demand into a sustainable and profitable business.

These pressures are compounded by broader economic conditions, including slowing economic growth, persistent inflation, and high borrowing costs.

Operating costs have increased substantially due to:

- Reduced Business rates relief.
- Increases in Employers' National Insurance contributions.
- A reduction in the National Insurance earnings threshold, increasing employment costs.
- Significant increases in the National Minimum Wage, particularly for younger workers who form a substantial proportion of the hospitality workforce.

As one industry commentator observed:

"Some of the increase in costs will have to be absorbed by the consumer, but, after several years of inflation-busting increases, the million-dollar question is how much further can the trade go on price? At what point do customers become resistant to price rise on top of price rise? Despite historically proven inelastic demand, when does the cost of a pub visit become unaffordable?"

These are precisely the commercial realities that pubs across the country are now facing.

The Proposed Solution

The proposal seeks to secure the long-term future of the Tichenham Inn through investment and modernisation.

The scheme includes the construction of two residential flats above the public house, together with a comprehensive refurbishment of the existing premises, involving an investment of approximately £500,000.

The refurbishment will relocate the cellar and customer toilets to the ground floor, significantly improving operational efficiency. The revised layout will create a more compact and attractive trading environment, reduce unnecessary staffing requirements, lower heating and energy costs, improve customer convenience and provide a much more welcoming atmosphere throughout the year.

Importantly, the public house will remain in operation following completion of the works.

The proposed residential accommodation will generate an additional and reliable income, that will help support the pub's ongoing operation. The proposal therefore represents not the replacement of a public house with residential development, but a strategy for adapting an existing public house to remain commercially viable, particularly where older buildings involve high operating costs, and securing its long-term future.

Conclusion

This application represents a carefully considered proposal that balances the need to preserve a valued community public house with the commercial realities facing the modern hospitality industry.

Rather than representing the loss of a public house, the proposal secures its future. It enables substantial private investment, safeguards employment, delivers two new homes and ensures that the Tichenham Inn can continue serving the local community for many years to come.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that planning permission be granted.

Best regards,
Richard
Director, Swakeleys Ltd